



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

September 13, 2004

Mr. Mark G. Mann
Assistant City Attorney
City of Garland
P.O. Box 469002
Garland, Texas 75046-9002

OR2004-7807

Dear Mr. Mann:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 209074.

The Garland Police Department (the "department") received a request for a particular offense report. You state you have released some of the requested information, but claim that the remaining information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.108(a)(1) excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime [if] release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime." Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.108(a)(1), 552.301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state that the submitted offense report relates to a pending criminal investigation. We therefore believe that release of the yellow-highlighted information in this report "would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime." *See* Gov't Code 552.108(a)(1). Thus, you may withhold this information under section 552.108(a)(1). We note that you have the discretion to release all or part of the information protected by section 552.108 that is not otherwise confidential by law. Gov't Code § 552.007.

Next, the department asserts that the orange-highlighted information is criminal history information that is confidential under common law privacy and excepted from release under

section 552.101. Section 552.101 excepts from disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.” Gov’t Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses the common law right to privacy, which protects information if it is highly intimate or embarrassing, such that its release would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and the public has no legitimate interest in it. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668 (Tex. 1976). Where an individual’s criminal history information has been compiled by a governmental entity, the information takes on a character that implicates the individual’s right to privacy. See *United States Dep’t of Justice v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press*, 489 U.S. 749 (1989). The information that you have highlighted in orange does not constitute criminal history information. Accordingly, we conclude this information is not confidential under common law privacy and excepted from release under section 552.101.

Finally, the department asserts the Texas driver’s license number highlighted in green is excepted from disclosure under section 552.130 of the Government Code. Section 552.130 excepts from disclosure information relating to a Texas driver’s license. Thus, the department must withhold the Texas driver’s license number highlighted in green under section 552.130.

To conclude, the yellow-highlighted information is excepted under section 552.108, and the green-highlighted information is excepted under section 552.130. The remaining information must be released.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov’t Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records

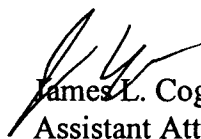
will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,


James L. Coggeshall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JLC/seg

Ref: ID# 209074

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Angie McCalment
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(w/o enclosures)